



IVP to Publish CaringBridge Cancer Journey of Steve and Sharol Hayner

April 2015 | **Alisse Wissman** | 630.734.4059 | awissman@ivpress.com

WESTMONT, ILLINOIS – Steve Hayner was healthy and fit and serving as president of Columbia Seminary when he found out he had pancreatic cancer. He and his wife, Sharol, embarked on a journey together with their children that soon included tens of thousands of visits from friends and acquaintances via CaringBridge. The overwhelming response to their posts on this website attested to the surprising and engaging way that they chose to live in the face of death. In July 2015 InterVarsity Press will be releasing a compilation of those posts in the book *Joy in the Journey: Finding Abundance in the Shadow of Death* by Steve and Sharol Hayner.

Steve was always known for signing letters and emails, “Joyfully, Steve.” These pages, including reflections from some of those closest to Steve and Sharol, will offer a glimpse into what it means to walk in honesty, with joy, even through great pain. “On the journey of life, we need scouts ahead of us who send back guidance and encouragement,” Sharol said. “As scouts in the valley of the shadow of death, I hope that our discovery of God’s faithfulness, presence and gift of joy especially on the darkest days will bring courage and the desire to trust Jesus in life and in death.”

Steve was the president emeritus of Columbia Theological Seminary and an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as well as a professor, author and the former president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. He held a PhD in Hebrew and Semitic Studies from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. He served on the boards of World Vision and International Justice Mission, among others. Known by many throughout the world, Steve’s passion was to prepare women and men to lead congregations toward the fulfillment of God’s call as churches who are biblically faithful and growing steadily in their love for God, their love for each other and their love for Christ’s work in the world.

“Steve Hayner has been first a hero and then a friend since I met him many years ago,” said John Ortberg, senior pastor of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church. “He was a people magnet and an idea machine and an energy force. To follow the journey that he and Sharol traveled together through the valley of the shadow of death was a privilege and a heartbreak and an education in hope. I’m grateful their searing, aching, honest, inspiring words are now permanently available. I cannot imagine a human being who would not benefit from it.”

Sharol has been serving in ministry for over forty years with her husband, Steve. She served as children’s music director at University Presbyterian Church in Seattle and as children’s music director and worship coordinator at Christ Presbyterian Church in Madison, Wisconsin. At age forty-eight she began seminary, and ultimately graduated from Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. Ordained in the PCUSA, she served as associate pastor for discipleship at Peachtree Presbyterian Church and now serves as parish associate at



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Kairos Church, both in Atlanta. She has three children and five grandchildren.

“I worked at InterVarsity Press during Steve Hayner’s tenure and saw the lasting impact he had on our organizational culture,” said Cindy Bunch, editorial director for IVP Books. “It has been a privilege to work on this book project with Sharol, so filled with both beauty and pain. They are both, for me, mentors in the way of life and death.”

Joy in the Journey will include forewords by Steve’s close friends, Mark Labberton, president of Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California, and Alex Gee, pastor of Fountain of Life Family Worship Center and president and founder of faith-based Nehemiah Community Development Corporation, both in Madison, Wisconsin.

“Seldom have I been as moved as in reading these epistles from Steve and Sharol Hayner ending ‘Joyfully yours,’” said Leighton Ford. “Through his life Steve helped so many to find life in all its fullness in Christ. Now, with his beloved Sharol, he guides us through the ending of life in fullness of hope. Thanks to InterVarsity Press for what I believe will become a classic.”

You can find more information about *Joy in the Journey* at ivpress.com/hayner.

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Founded in 1947 as an extension of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA, InterVarsity Press serves those in the university, the church and the world by publishing thoughtful Christian books that equip and encourage people to follow Jesus as Savior and Lord in all of life. For more information, visit ivpress.com.



Sharol Hayner, coauthor of *Joy in the Journey: Finding Abundance in the Shadow of Death*

Available July 2015

\$16, 159 pages, hardcover

978-0-8308-4447-0

“Throughout nine months of enduring terminal cancer, Steve and Sharol hide nothing of their struggle, and yet withhold nothing of their bold faith. This is a rare gift, to be invited into a journey so utterly full and overflowing with both the depth of pain and loss and yet the anchor of hope. I will always count it as one of my greatest treasures to have known Steve in both life and death.”

—Gary A. Haugen, president, International Justice Mission

Couple Shares Journey of Facing Cancer and Death

How did *Joy in the Journey* become a book?

Sharol Hayner: We started the CaringBridge website in order to better communicate with friends during Steve’s cancer journey. We saw this as an efficient means of sharing so as to avoid duplicate emails. We never counted on the readership taking off as it did. What seems to have resonated with readers was the honesty and vulnerability with which we both wrote. In the end, I believe it was talking about death in an honest and straightforward manner that caught people’s attention.

Why do you think people were drawn to your straightforward discussion of death?

Sharol: There is much interest these days in articles and books on death—especially on dying a beautiful death (the name of a recent article in *The New York Times*). This somewhat taboo conversation topic is becoming a more common issue especially as the Boomers grow older and must face their own mortality. How we talk about death makes a difference—even for people of faith who are confident about their future destination. It’s the process of getting to the gates of heaven that is often scary and something many postpone thinking about.

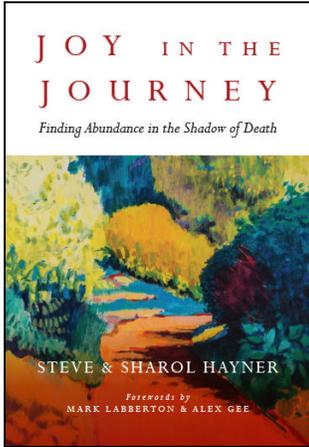
What is at the heart of *Joy in the Journey*?

Sharol: The central thesis of the book is that it is possible to live with joy even in the darkest situations if we are trusting God’s faithfulness and love for us. The honesty with which we talked about the struggles while also claiming the gift of joy is probably what is distinctive about *Joy in the Journey*.

What do you hope readers take away from reading about Steve’s and your experience with sickness and death?

Sharol:

- God is present and faithful in any circumstance or struggle—especially as we face death.
- It’s okay to struggle. That’s human. But there are also some choices we make in the midst of adversity. Choosing joy and hospitality—making space for the other in our lives—are two of those choices.
- We cannot journey like this alone but need many who are walking alongside—even those who are new acquaintances or strangers.
- Following Jesus means living one day at a time—sometimes one moment at a time. Living into or fearing the future is usually fruitless.
- There is a call each day for everyone, even when we are facing death.



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— John Ortberg, senior pastor of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church and author of *Soul Keeping*

The Life Questions that Cancer Unveils

The following is excerpted from the book Joy in the Journey, reflections that Steve Hayner and his wife Sharol recorded as he battled aggressive pancreatic cancer last year. Steve was first diagnosed the week after Easter, 2014, and passed away early 2015. Steve was the president emeritus of Columbia Theological Seminary and an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as well as a professor, author and the former president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

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May 15: Steve *Cancer and Calling*

Today is the first full day of the next chapter in our journey.

We received loads of information, had a chance to discuss not only the treatment options, but also our goals and values, and we learned how we would be accessing all of the resources available as we take each step. Sharol and our friend Mary Banks Knechle (a trained parish nurse and patient advocate) listened, took notes and asked fabulous questions along the way. I worked to absorb as much information as possible.

Never once did I feel like just a project or a case.

In the end the day was enormously encouraging to me, and I came home feeling empowered. My response was quite different from Sharol's, but we both know that this will frequently be the case in this journey. While we share many of the same circumstances and values, we don't share the same internal or external challenges.

An important part of this period is learning to love each other the way each of us needs to be loved – and giving each other space to do the work we need to do individually.

The medical team will work with me to minimize the long list of potential side effects, though I expect that I will have some days ahead when I will have some real physical challenges.

What many want to know is the prognosis. Will this work? Can they cure this cancer? These are not my questions.

All life on planet earth is terminal, and while we can certainly contribute to our own well-being in amazing ways, none of us is ultimately in control. One day, my life will be swallowed up by Life. And for today, I am choosing truth, joy and love wherever and

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however I can.

I am resolute in my desire to learn, to fulfill my calling and to engage each day with as much joy as I am graciously given or can borrow.

“With remarkable candor, Steve and Sharol Hayner teach us how to live in the face of dying. Over nine months of physical decline, they lay bare a wide range of emotions – faith and fear, grace and grief, poignancy and pain. The journey, though hellish at times, is punctuated by the Lord’s presence, family love and proactive friends. Years ago, I followed Steve to InterVarsity. Someday, when my health fails, I will follow him to glory. When that happens, I want to emulate his journey of dignity, courage and joy.”

– Alec Hill, president,
InterVarsity Christian
Fellowship

I’m apprehensive about the unknown, and I am certainly feeling knocked around. But I am not afraid – at least yet.

To paraphrase Psalm 121, “I lift my eyes to the hills. Is that where my help comes from? No, my help comes from the Lord, who is maker of both heaven and earth – and who holds me in the palm of God’s hand.”

**May 16: Sharol
My Feeble Cry**

We are both feeling encouraged today. With Steve having more energy and feeling almost “normal” for a great portion of the day, I am beginning to gain hope for these next weeks. I honestly thought that Steve curled up on the bed with the TV on, hardly able to eat and wrestling with pain would be the norm. Steve is managing the pain very well now, is able to eat and is much more cheery. I thank God for you all and for your prayers. We are being carried along by them.

This is my story for today from Psalm 40. God heard my feeble cry.

*I waited patiently for the Lord;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.
He drew me up from the desolate pit,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.
He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in the Lord.*

– Taken from Joy in the Journey





AUTHOR BIO



Steve and Sharol Hayner,

coauthors of *Joy in the Journey:*

Finding Abundance in the

Shadow of Death

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Steve Hayner (1948–2015) was the president emeritus of Columbia Theological Seminary and an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as well as a professor, author and the former president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Known by many throughout the world with love, affection and gratitude, Steve’s passion was to prepare women and men to lead congregations toward the fulfillment of God’s call to be churches who are biblically faithful and growing steadily in their love for God, for each other and for Christ’s work in the world.

Hayner began his education at Whitman College where he earned his BA in English literature. He then received his MTS in Semitic studies at Harvard Divinity School and one year later earned a ThM from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Steve was then ordained and installed as “university pastor” at University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, Washington, where he was involved with students and faculty. What started as a group of seventeen students quickly grew to over 1,200. While there, he completed his PhD in Hebrew and Semitic Studies at the University of St. Andrews in Fife, Scotland, in 1984.

Steve then took the position of vice president of Student Affairs at Seattle Pacific University. Throughout his time in Seattle, he was involved as an adjunct professor of Old Testament with Fuller Theological Seminary extension sites. In 1988, Steve was called as president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (USA), a nondenominational discipleship ministry to students on college campuses across the country.

In 2001, Steve made the transition from the academic world to parish ministry. He became the senior associate pastor at High Point Church and the associate pastor at the Fountain of Life Family Ministry Center, both in Madison, Wisconsin. He served on a number of national and international boards, including World Vision, International Justice Mission, Presbyterian Global Fellowship, Christian International Scholarship Foundation, Fuller Seminary and The Navigators. He was awarded an honorary DD degree by Presbyterian College in 2011.

After being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in the spring of 2014, Steve passed away in early 2015.

Steve’s wife **Sharol Hayner** (coauthor of *Joy in the Journey*) has been in ministry for over forty years. She served as children’s music director at University Presbyterian Church in Seattle and as children’s music director and worship coordinator at Christ Presbyterian Church in Madison, Wisconsin. At age forty-eight, she began seminary and ultimately graduated from Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. Ordained in the PCUSA, she served as associate pastor for discipleship at Peachtree Presbyterian Church and now serves as parish associate at Kairos Church, both in Atlanta. Sharol and Steve have three children and five grandchildren, all of whom live in the South.